136 of wild ducks settles down here with rustling wings you may be meeting with old acquaintances again from the Wiener Stadtpark. The only difference is that there they allow themselves to be tamely fed by children, strutting like actors in the pay of the Municipality of Vienna, while here they lead a free marauder's life in the nightly-stirring reeds of the Neusiedler Lake.

133 And the centre of all this, the lake. As you will expect, it too possesses strange features. In Austria, country of Alps, it is the only lake which is typical of those found in the steppes. Flat as a pancake, it is so shallow that you can fearlessly wade across it in any direction you choose, with no need to know how to swim, exposed to no other danger than that of inadvertently crossing the Hungarian frontier which runs through it.

On what one might call Western Austria's corresponding lake, Lake Constance, you find proud steamers sailing over the bottomless depths famed in ballads, but on the lake in the Burgenland the reckless sailor must only beware that the wind does not blow away all the water from under his keel. This must not be taken too literally, yet it is a fact that when the wind blows for days in a certain direction the whole water is actually driven together in the extreme corner of the lake. This phenomenon of the bewildering "Windstaue" is only one of the many peculiarities of the lake.

Another strange thing is that nobody knows whence its waters come, for the only tributary is the Wulka, an insignificant little trickle. Four times as much water as the brook contributes is regularly lost from its wide surface by evaporation. Logically, the lake should have vanished long ago. In defiance of all the laws of hydrography, it continues to exist, leaving scientists to puzzle out from what hidden sources it manages to keep going.

[691] Occasionally the lake falls on hard times, and about once in a century it disappears altogether. This provides an occasion for the peasants on its shores to measure its bed painstakingly, and to resume the bickerings about the ownership thereof which had been dropped during the preceding century or even the one before it. About the time that the legal costs of these quarrels have so accumulated that the lawyers begin to be afraid that they will not be able to collect them, the lake quietly rises again, taking possession of its old bed as if it had never chosen to